



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

DU COUDRAY'S "OBSERVATIONS ON THE FORTS INTENDED FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE TWO PASSAGES OF THE RIVER DELAWARE," JULY, 1777.¹

Fort at Billingsport.

1. As to the Situation, it is well-chosen, it commands the River in the narrowest Part I have seen, and is the most capable of Defence.

2. As to the Plan or Projection, it is very bad. The Object in View ought to have been to defend the Chain of Chevaux de Frize, which bar the River. For that Purpose 30 or 40 Cannon, well placed, would have been sufficient. The Edge of the Scarp would have afforded room enough; it was therefore necessary to shut the Gorge of the Battery, so that the Enemy might be obliged to land and open Trenches, in order to take Possession of it. And in the particular Circumstances in which this Fort was begun, it was necessary in 6 weeks or 2 months to have had something finished to answer the End proposed. But to complete it agreeable to the present Circumstance, and to finish the Half-moon necessary to command the Highth on the opposite side of the River, would require at least four or five Months, provided it were well constructed and a great number of Men were employed, in as much as the Soil is the most unfavourable that can be met with.

Besides the Length of Time, which the Plan of this Work would require in the present situation of Affairs, another Inconvenience attends it, which is, that it would require for its Defense, a more numerous Garrison than could be spared from the Army. For it would require at least 2000 Men; as, from the Badness of the soil, the Enemy's Cannon would

¹ Manuscript in collection Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

soon make great Destruction, which must be repaired every Night, to prevent the works from being stormed.

3. As to the execution of these Works, I find it to be without Judgment. The Planks and Piles to support the sand are not half thick enough. The Piles instead of being inclined to bear against the Bank, have been fixed perpendicular and are already overturned. Instead of placing the Batteries destined to fire on the River, on the Border of the Scarp, they have placed them 7 or 8 Fathoms back, which removes them farther from their Object, and exposes them to the Enemy's attempt at the Bottom of the Scarp. And suppose the Works completed, only one Piece of Cannon can do Execution. Instead of making use of the Ground which forms the Border of the Scarp and which is firm on the superficies, and supported at least for some Depth by the Roots of Trees which grew there, they have raised a great Part of the Breastwork with loose Sand in the manner before mentioned, and have taken the Trouble to sink a Ditch, which might have been spared, as the Scarp answered the Purpose. From whence it appears that no Dependence can be put upon this Work, as it cannot be finished in Time and requires too great a Number of Men and Artillery for its Defense.

To defend the Chain of Chevaux de Frize which bars the River opposite to the Fort, all dependence for the present must be on the Floating-Batteries and Gondolas which are ready, or which can soon be so. Some use, however, can be made of a Part of the Fort, of which we have been speaking: and for this Purpose there should be a Battery fixed in each of the two Demi-Bastions on the side of the River. And by cutting those two Demi-Bastions by the Gorge and the angle of the Flank, they will each be transformed into a Redoubt with four Fronts. Each of these Redoubts may be secured against a Coup de Main by covering them with a double Ditch and Pallisades in the Bottom of the Ditch. It will then be necessary to level all those Parts of the Fort which may serve to cover the Enemy. These two

Works by means of 1500 or 2000 Labourers well directed may be executed in 20 Days: and in my Opinion this is all that can be done in the present situation of affairs.

I would advise to hazard in those Redoubts only 400 or 500 Men with 25 or 30 Pieces of Cannon, still observing that it is not upon them, but on the Floating Batteries supported by these Redoubts that the Defense of the Chevaux de Frize depends.

In times less urgent than the present, a better use might be made of this Place, but by reason of the Badness of the Soil nothing solid can be constructed but by extreme expense.

Unless shoal Water prevents the Enemy from going to the opposite side of the River, it will be necessary to construct on the opposite Island another Battery of 15 or 20 Guns which must also be fortified. This may be performed with little Expense on account of the Goodness of the Soil and the Facility of making use of the River to cover it by wide and deep Ditches.

The Fort.

The Fort is badly situated; the Battery which forms its principal object is improperly directed, which renders Half the Guns useless. The Embrazures are badly constructed, too open on the inside, and not sufficiently open without: some are directed obliquely without any motive; the interior Sloping are too straight, and by this means begin already to tumble down.

This Fort cannot prevent the Passage of the Enemy, and when they have passed, it can be of no use; consequently it can answer no valuable Purpose.

Fort of Red-bank.

This Fort is better conceived, directed, and executed than either of those above mentioned. It does the more Honour to Colonel Bull, as he had no other assistance than natural good sense unenlightened by Theory. This is perceivable

from a View of it. There are indeed Faults in the Plan, and in the Execution, but they do not render it useless as the two former Forts. If we may judge by the Proportion of the work already finished, it is reasonable to expect the whole will be in a State of Defence in the course of a Fortnight. What unfortunately renders this Fort of little or no Consequence is this; its object is, and can be, no other than to prevent the Enemy from taking possession of the Highth upon which it is placed, in order to establish Batteries and thereby oblige the Gallies and Floating Batteries employed in supporting the Chain of Chevaux de Frize, to retreat. But this case could never happen, unless the Enemy should be exposed to a Fire from the Floating Batteries and Gallies, which they could not silence with their ships. This would oblige them to land Men and Artillery, to occupy by Force the Highth in question, and then fire on the Floating Batteries and Gallies occupied in supporting the Chain. But the situation of the Place will not permit such an idea; for the River is here so wide that if the States had four times as many Gallies, Ships and Batteries as they have at this place and above it, the Enemy, we must think, would still have a superior Fire, as the width of the River would allow them to employ a greater number of Ships. If by this means, they succeed in beating off the Gallies and Floating Batteries, it cannot be supposed they will put themselves to the Trouble of landing to attack Colonel Bull's Fort. Therefore I look upon this Fort as useless with respect to the Object for which it was intended, viz., to contribute in obstructing the Passage of the River, and preventing the Enemy from possessing the Highth it commands. This Passage is much too wide to be defended by the present means. I would therefore advise to carry all the means of Defense to the Passage at Billingsport. This place is incomparably more capable of support, and it is better to make a respectable stand in one place than to defend two in an indifferent manner. The Gallies and Floating Batteries removed thither, will make up for the insufficiency of the

intrenched Battery, which I would propose to substitute in place of the present Fort, and of that which I shall think ought to be erected at the Point of the Island, the River being much narrower in this place than in that of which we have been speaking. The Gallies and Batteries may more easily make Head against the Enemy who will not be able to make so great a Fire, and will be obliged to bear a much nearer one, and better supported, than could be opposed to them at Red Bank. The Cannon at this Fort might partly serve for the Batteries at Billingsport. I would not, however, advise to demolish the Battery at Red Bank, but to leave there two or three of the poorest of the Cannon.

I would also advise to remove from this Line no more Chevaux de Frize than would be judged necessary to secure by three Rows, the Passage of Billingsport.

I also advise to preserve Colonel Bull's Fort. Thereby you may induce the Enemy to believe they would have a second Line of obstacles to encounter, after they had surmounted the first; and besides for another Reason, which appears to me a very important one especially in the present Circumstances of Affairs, the Government would escape the Censure inconsideration and mistakes, which the evil-minded are always ready to pass, and the People to adopt, when they see Works which have been erected with much Labour and Expense pulled down. For the same Reason I would propose to preserve in Colonel Jones's Fort, all that will not be of service to the Enemy in case they should attack the Redoubts, which I think ought to be substituted in place of this Fort.

My Thoughts on the above subjects as here expressed, seem the better founded, as they appeared to conform with the Ideas of General Arnold, to whom I had the Honour to communicate them, as far as the difference of Language would permit; and also with those of Mr. Duer and Mr. Shea by whom I had the advantage of being understood.

[1777.]

DU COUDRAY.